

South Precinct Email Community Newsletter
December 10, 2010



Dear Community Friends:

Once again we are seeing several neighborhoods that are experiencing a higher than normal rate of car prowls. It is not uncommon for numerous cars in a small geographical area to be prowled in the same short time frame. This is the case at shopping area parking lots, near gathering halls as well as in residential neighborhoods. As we are in the midst of the holiday shopping season, we can anticipate more multiple vehicle car prowls in an area. With that in mind, we offer car related crime prevention reminders as well as some home and personal safety tips for the holidays. By the way, this is our 100th email newsletter.

Car Prowl Prevention

- When you exit or enter your parked vehicle, take a moment to look around the area.
- Turn off and lock your car whenever you have to walk away from it. This includes at gas pumps, ATM machines, etc. Never leave your car idling.
- Before leaving your parked car, always remove the keys, roll up the windows and lock the car.
- **Leave No Valuables in Your Car.** Never leave valuables in your car. Items of little or no value to you still look inviting to a thief. Even pocket change is enough of an enticement for some thieves.
- If you must leave valuables in your car (say you're out shopping and still have some stops to make), make sure that nothing of value is within plain view. Place items in your car trunk out of sight. Do this when you get to your car, rather than waiting until you park at your next stop.
- Don't leave accessories visible in your car. You may have taken the Laptop or iPod in with you, but if you leave the USB cables for your laptop or earbuds for the iPod in the back seat, the offender may think those items are in the car and break in anyway.
- If you have a GPS, think about how it is mounted in your car. If the mounting for the GPS is visible, the thief may think the GPS is in the glove box or under the seat and may break in to try to get it. Have removable mounting for the GPS and put that out of sight as well.
- If possible, store your car in a closed and locked garage. Make a habit of locking your garage door and car doors.
- If your car is stored in a carport or parked near your house, leave your exterior lights on throughout the night.
- If you park on the street, choose a well-lit, open space even if it means adding additional street/yard lighting & trimming back trees/bushes that block your view of your vehicle.
- If you park in a paid lot, use lots that have attendants.
- Consider replacing the light fixture closest to your car with a motion detector unit. Motion detectors are good psychological deterrents since the normal assumption of a person seeing a light come on is that someone has seen them. Additionally, the light makes the prowler or thief more visible.

Personal Safety During The Holiday Season

- Before you leave home decide what you actually need to take with you rather than automatically taking your entire handbag or wallet out of habit. For example, if you are going to the grocery store for a few items, you can carry cash, a single check, or credit/debit card, I.D. and keys in a pocket.
- Wear clothing and shoes that are comfortable, low profile and appropriate for the weather. This may not be the most fashionable choice but it is the safest.
- Always plan your route and stay alert to your surroundings. Avoid shortcuts. Walk confidently. Scan your surroundings and make eye contact with people.
- Carry your keys and ID separately. If someone gets your keys and ID, they may go to your home or business and access that location with the keys.
- Always maintain positive control over your items. Don't tempt a thief by leaving your purse, wallet or packages unattended. It only takes a second to grab them. Never leave your purse unattended, even if it is in a shopping cart.
- If you carry a purse, don't dangle it from your arm. Carry it very close to you, preferable with the strap over your shoulder and the purse to the front of your body. Even better would be to carry the purse over your shoulder *across* your body and under your coat.

- Take a friend along when doing holiday shopping. Using the buddy system reduces your chances of being a victim of robbery.
- When paying by cash, only take out the amount needed and keep the remainder out of view. It's always a good idea to carry minimal amounts of cash, regardless of the time of year.
- Beware of strangers who bump, shove or get too close. Pickpockets may use these diversions to lift your wallet.
- Be cautious of those you don't know who offer to carry bags and packages for you. Depending on where you shop, store personnel or mall security may offer assistance in carrying packages to your car or escorting you to your vehicle.
- If you have to return to your car to store purchases, place them in the trunk out of sight. Do this when you get to your car, rather than waiting until you park at your next stop. Gifts and other valuables should never be left in clear view.
- Before returning to your car, make sure you're not over-burdened with packages. Have your car keys in hand to avoid "searching" for them when you reach your car.
- Avoid walking alone at night. As much as possible, walk or travel with a friend, even during the daytime.
- If you are attacked on the street, make as much noise as possible by calling for help or blowing a whistle. Do not pursue your attacker. *Call 911 and report the crime as soon as possible.*

When Using an Automated Teller Machine

- Only take out the amount you need, rather than the maximum you can get.
- Don't walk away from the cash machine counting your money. That's an invitation to someone who may not have the best of intentions in mind.
- Secure your money and your bank/credit card back in your wallet or pocket before leaving the ATM.
- Beware of strangers hanging around the ATM. Wait until they leave, or consider using an alternate cash machine. You should report suspicious people to bank personnel, mall security and/or police.
- Using the ATM inside a major grocery store might be a better alternative to using one on the street, especially during hours of darkness.
- Always keep your PIN number separate from your bank and/or credit card.

Prevention Tips At Home

- Don't openly display wrapped or received gifts so they are easily visible from the street. You increase the possibility that a burglar will be tempted to gain entry and steal the gifts.
- When disposing of the packaging in which gifts and other purchases come, realize that when you place these out for recycling or trash collection, those boxes sitting out on the curb on collection day give a passer-by a pretty good indication of what's in your home. Recycle the packaging, yes - but break the boxes down first, turn them inside out so the exterior writing does not show, and don't put them on the curb until collection day.
- Burglars often enter through unlocked doors or windows. When exterior Christmas light extension cords are run inside through a window, this prevents the window from being secured, and this unsecured window is visibly noticeable. Consider installing an inexpensive exterior outlet for your holiday lights so you don't provide an opened and unlocked entry to your home.
- If you have ordered items and are going to have them delivered, consider having them delivered to your place of business rather than your home. This reduces the opportunity for packages to be left unattended on your porch and therefore an enticing target for thieves.
- If you are going to be away, let your trusted neighbors know that you plan to be out town so that they can watch your home for you. If they see suspicious activity while you are gone, they will know to call 911 for you.

We wish you a happy and joyous Holiday Season. Peace, prosperity and good health to you and yours this Season and in the coming New Year.

Take Care and Stay Safe!

Captain Mike Nolan, South Precinct Commander Mark Solomon, Crime Prevention Coordinator